KANTAR TNS

Extraordinary growth can be found in seemingly ordinary moments

The Experience Factor

Helen Kerr looks at how understanding the impact of experience can help interpret brand tracking in the real world.

As researchers, we often have a battle on our hands – steady brand tracking metrics from one month to the next despite a flurry of activity pushed out by our clients. It's interesting to put this into context in the real world; why would you become aware of, choose to buy, or even come to love a brand that you didn't before?

Marketers spend much time living and breathing brands; but shouldn't lose sight of how consumers interact with them in the real world. Making decisions and measuring those decisions is not static – but it takes time for a brand's activities to impact. Daniel Kahneman's behavioural economics research tells us that decisions are made based on memories of experiences, not the experiences themselves – and memories can change perceptions over time.

A drop in the ocean

We experience a lot, every day. There are so many moments and interactions and we only recall a fraction of them. One interaction at the shop shelf or passing a big billboard is a drop in the ocean relative to everything else we have seen or will see. Will seeing the same brand on the shelf twice, three times, or more really change our mind and behaviour?

That depends. The Eherenberg Bass Institute would probably argue 'yes'; however, our brains are not swayed by the sheer volume and intensity of messaging alone. If this were the case, then large brands would remain large and new entrants would never grow.

The reality is that just 10 per cent of the top 100 global brands actually remain in the top 10 from decade to decade. Simply being present or noticed does not drive recall. It may be the starting point, but it takes more powerful additional qualities to be remembered, become influential and make us care.

Cutting through the 'zombie mode'

We are more apt to make brand decisions in a tuned-out, habitual mode, but brands can cut through this 'zombie mode' and influence us. If they say and do the right things at the right times, brands can put themselves in pole position to become the default choice–an excellent place to be in a consumer's mind.

So, in the context of our busy lives and given the tendency for shortcuts, is it any wonder that trackers flatline? No. As Field and Binet's research shows, marketing experts increasingly understand that it can take time to realise the cause and effect for even 'best in class' brand communications and activations. So, how does understanding the impact of the sum of moments and experiences provide expectation parameters for your next tracking wave?

There are four key insights to keep in mind.

Only 15 per cent of brand equity comes from recent brand experience

According to Kantar TNS's touchpoint database, even a brand with 20 per cent equity can only shift their share by around three percentage points on average in the short term – across all touchpoints. This is because it takes time to create impact, as consumers tend to rely on the memories built up over a longer period.

'New' gets noticed

Recent experience leads to a higher share of impact when new brands and new consumers are involved. If you're an unknown, then simply your presence creates new memories, moving you from zero to something. Likewise, for consumers – if they don't know much about the category, then what they see when browsing will be more likely to have an impact. For example, recent marketing activities are twice as likely to have an impact on younger consumers entering into the insurance market as they are on older consumers.

The reality

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How people interact determines impact in the short term

One of the lowest levels of impact of recent activities is in the insurance category where the contribution of recent activities to brand equity share is five per cent. Here marketers cannot realistically make a huge difference in the short-to-medium-term. However, in other categories such as FMCG, the impact of recent experiences may be as great as 30 per cent. Differences at a category level tend to be a function of the consumer's investment with a category. The larger the investment in time and money, the lower the impact of recent experience, and the more people rely on longer-term memories. Understanding the dynamics of choice in your category can help inform expectations of how much shift you'll see in metrics.

Brand experience can come from almost anywhere

As researchers, we need to be cognisant of paid, owned and earned channels. Our clients may have pushed out a great TV campaign, but there's more going on. TV tends to account for seven per cent of recent brand experience, so in reality that 'fantastic 15 seconds' isn't going work wonders on the flat line, but it will help shift it.

Getting real

So, what does this all mean for researchers? There are many important aspects in the growth and continuity of a brand, but each only exercises a small influence over the brand's lifetime. There are limits – for even the most creative campaign – to what can be achieved within a finite period and the key to nurturing brand equity share is the intimate connection of multiple touchpoints. Understanding this can help to provide guardrails around the degree of shift to anticipate in your next tracking wave and to set expectations in the context of the real world.

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